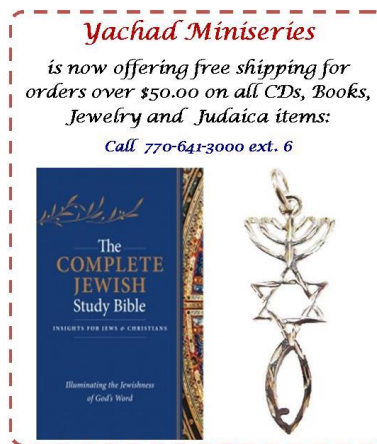


# ***Yachad Ministries' Israel's News Update February 23, 2023 (Adar 2, 5783)***



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***Iran Said on Cusp of Ability to Make Nukes, Having Enriched Uranium to 84% Purity;*** Inspectors from the UN atomic agency discovered uranium enriched to 84-percent purity in Iran last week, closer than ever to weapons-grade levels, American media reported Sunday, February 19, citing two unnamed senior diplomats. Iran has been known thus far to have enriched uranium to 60%. A purity of 90% is needed to produce nuclear weapons. International Atomic Energy Agency inspectors are trying to determine whether Tehran deliberately made the move or if it was an “unintended accumulation within the network of pipes connecting the hundreds of fast-spinning centrifuges used to separate the isotopes,” the report said. One diplomat said that Iran had not submitted the necessary paperwork to declare its intention of raising enrichment levels at two nuclear facilities in Natanz and Fordo. The other diplomat noted that even if the material built up accidentally, as has happened in the past, it shows the problems associated with Iran’s activities in producing highly enriched uranium. The IAEA said in a tweet that it was “aware of recent media reports relating to uranium enrichment levels in Iran.” Director-General Rafael Grossi noted that the agency was in talks with Iran regarding the results of recent inspections, the tweet added.

***Iran Planning Hit Squads to Assassinate Diaspora Jews;*** Iran has been “mapping” Jewish communities outside Israel to be hit by assassination squads that would be activated if Israel attacks its nuclear facilities, according to a French journalist who was one of the few Westerners to meet with Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Apparently, unbeknownst to Khamenei and senior regime members, Catherine Perez-Shakdam is also Jewish. She found out about the hit squad program while in Iran for her audience with Khamenei, according to a Jewish media outlet. She discovered that Iran had “mapped” a large number of Jews to be targeted for assassination in the event of an Israeli attack at a high-level meeting in Tehran. The plan involved identifying senior Jewish figures and focusing on “how to strike and where.” According to Perez-Shakdam – who also met President Ebrahim Raisi and the late Qasem Soleimani who was assassinated by the US three years ago – the kill teams would be activated in the event of a war between Israel and Iran, so that “the diaspora would have a very nasty surprise.” She told the Jewish media outlet that Khamenei was only afraid of one thing: an Israeli attack. “He believes Netanyahu’s threats and he knows that, for now, Israel is militarily superior,” she said.

***Nasrallah Threatens Violence Against Israel If Lebanese Gas Development Delayed;*** Hezbollah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah threatened Israel's Karish gas field again on Thursday, February 16, warning that if there is "procrastination" in extracting gas from Lebanese waters for Lebanon, they will not let the Karish field continue to operate. "If there is procrastination regarding the issue of oil and gas from Lebanese waters, will we allow Israel to continue extracting oil and gas from Karish? I tell you never, this means if you want us to starve, we will kill you, and I thought well of what I said," warned Nasrallah. The Hezbollah leader added that the US "must be told to stay away" from the issue of gas and oil extraction off the coast of Lebanon. "I tell the Americans that if they want to sow chaos in Lebanon, you will lose everything," said Nasrallah. "Those who bet that pain and suffering will make our environment abandon its principles and achievements are delusional." "If you push Lebanon into chaos, you must wait for chaos in the entire region, foremost of which is your protégé, Israel," said Nasrallah. "Just as we were ready for war in defense of our oil, we are ready to extend our arms to your protégé Israel."

***Syria Says 5 Killed, 15 Wounded in Israeli Strike on Damascus Residential Area;*** The Israeli Air Force allegedly carried out a strike late Saturday night, February 18, targeting a residential neighborhood in Damascus, killing five people, and leaving 15 others hurt, Syria's state news agency reported. There was no comment from the Israel Defense Forces, in line with its policy of not generally commenting on air raids in the country. Israeli officials have previously said the IDF does not target civilians and seeks to avoid damage to residential areas as much as possible. According to British media, the strike targeted an area in the Kafar Sousah neighborhood in the Syrian capital, near a large and heavily guarded security complex, and close to Iranian installations. A Syrian opposition media outlet claimed the strikes targeted Iranian militia officials at the so-called Iranian school in Kafar Sousah. It also said that the damage to the residential buildings in Kafar Sousah was caused by a misfired Syrian anti-aircraft missile. The strike was later condemned by Russia, a key backer of the Syrian regime in the over decade-long civil war, which called the attack a "flagrant violation" of international law. "We strongly urge the Israeli side to stop armed provocations against the Syrian Arab Republic and refrain from steps that are fraught with dangerous consequences for the entire region," Russian foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said.

***Syrian Government, Rebels Clash in Earthquake-Hit Region;*** Syrian government forces and rebels have clashed overnight in northwest Syria for the first time since an earthquake devastated the region on February 6, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported on Friday, February 17. The northwest, one of the region's most badly affected by the earthquake that hit Syria and Turkey, is controlled by insurgents opposed to the government of President Bashar Assad in Damascus. The Observatory said government forces had shelled the outskirts of the rebel-town of Atareb. This coincided with clashes with heavy machine guns between government and rebel forces at a nearby frontline, it said. Observatory Director Rami Abdulrahman said 235 people in Atareb and the nearby areas had died in the earthquake. More than 4,400 people were reported killed by the earthquake in the northwest, according to a UN agency, the bulk of the fatalities in Syria. Government and rebel forces also clashed in another part of the northwest near the government town of Saraqeb, while government forces shelled the outskirts of two villages in Hama province, the Observatory reported.

***14 Jews Rescued from Devastated Turkish City of Antakya, Given Shelter in Istanbul;*** Fourteen Jews have been rescued in Antakya, a city in southern Turkey whose Jewish community lost its leader and his wife, Saul, and Fortuna Cenudioglu, in the catastrophic earthquakes, an Israeli fundraising group said Wednesday, February 15. The community members, from eight families — most of the city's remaining Jews — were flown to Istanbul and are currently in a Jewish nursing home and in the homes of Jewish community members, according to the group, Keren Hayesod. They are expected to stay in Istanbul for the

foreseeable future. The city has two more Jewish families, who have been moved to a safe area near Antakya, the group said. Keren Hayesod touted the roles of Istanbul's Jewish community and Keren Hayesod donors in enabling the operation, singling out Israeli-Kazakh businessman Alexander Machkevitch. "Even in the most difficult days following the disaster, members of Turkey's Jewish community discovered unity which has characterized the Jewish people throughout the generations," Machkevitch, honorary president of the Euro-Asian Jewish Congress, was quoted as saying in a statement from Keren Hayesod. There has been a Jewish community in Antakya for over 2,500 years, and it is mentioned in Flavius Josephus's "The Wars of the Jews." Known as Antioch, the city was a key Jewish hub before and after the destruction of the second Jewish Temple in the year 70 CE.

***Knesset Passes Law Stripping Terrorists of Citizenship;*** The Knesset on Wednesday afternoon, February 15, passed a law, stripping convicted terrorists who receive payments from the Palestinian Authority of their Israeli citizenship. The legislation received broad bipartisan support and passed with a supermajority of 94 votes in favor in its third reading. 10 MKs voted against the bill. The new law will allow the Interior Minister to revoke the citizenship of Israeli Arabs who receive payments from the Palestinian Authority after committing terrorist attacks against Israeli citizens or security forces. The terrorist would be deported either to the Palestinian Authority in Judea and Samaria or to the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip. According to the wording of the law, the PA's payments to terrorists create a relationship between the PA and the terrorist, allowing for them to be deported to the PA. The Interior Minister will have 14 days to decide to revoke the terrorist's citizenship and deport him or her.

***World's Oldest Hebrew Bible Could Fetch up to \$50 Million at Auction;*** The world's oldest and most complete Hebrew Bible will go on display in London this week, before an auction in May where it could sell for up to \$50 million, Sotheby's said on Wednesday, February 15. If the 1,000-year-old Holy Book sells for near its estimated value, the Codex Sassoon would become the most valuable printed text or historical document ever sold at auction, Sotheby's said. Billionaire investor Kenneth Griffin set the record in 2021 when he paid \$43.2 million at a Sotheby's auction for a first edition copy of the US Constitution. The Codex Sassoon is named after previous owner David Solomon Sassoon, who acquired the Bible in 1929 and assembled one of the most significant private collections of Judaica and Hebraic manuscripts in the 20th century. The document offers a critical link bridging Jewish oral tradition to the Modern Hebrew Bible. It was not until recently that the current owner, collector Jacqui Safra, had the Codex Sassoon carbon dated, confirming it was older than the Aleppo Codex and the Leningrad Codex, two other major early Hebrew Bibles, according to Sotheby's.

***Israeli Amb. Demands UN Security Council Condemn Spate of Deadly Terror Attacks;*** Israeli Ambassador to the United Nations Gilad Erdan sent an urgent letter Tuesday morning, February 14, to the members of the UN Security Council, ahead of the meeting that the Council will hold on Monday, February 20 on the Middle East. In the letter, Ambassador Erdan called on the international community to condemn the recent Palestinian terror attacks that left 11 Israelis murdered, including children. The Ambassador also rebuked the Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas for his refusal to condemn the attacks and for the incitement that led to them. In his letter, Erdan wrote: "I write to you with immense sorrow and distress to report on the latest wave of terrorist attacks that Israel has been facing over the past 19 days." "These include: the shooting attack at the entrance to a synagogue in Jerusalem on January 27th, in which seven civilians were murdered including a 14 year old, and three injured; the shooting attack in Jerusalem on January 28th, in which two civilians were injured by a thirteen-year-old terrorist; the ramming attack in Jerusalem on February 10th, in which three civilians were murdered, among them two children aged six and eight; the stabbing attack in Jerusalem yesterday, on February 13th, in which a civilian was injured; and the latest stabbing attack in Shuafat yesterday, in which a soldier was murdered." "I call on the international community to condemn the latest terror attacks against Israeli civilians in the

strongest and unequivocal terms. Those abhorrent crimes are being encouraged and applauded by the Palestinian Authority and Palestinian terror groups such as Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad and PFLP among others." In one of the latest attacks, a 17-year-old boy was stabbed at the Chain Gate of the Old City of Jerusalem. The police have determined that it was a terrorist stabbing attack and that the attacker has been arrested. The suspect has been identified as a 14-year-old resident of the Shuafat neighborhood of Jerusalem.

***Israel to Legalize Nine Communities in Judea and Samaria in Response to Jerusalem Terror Attack;*** Israel's Security Cabinet on Sunday, February 12, unanimously decided to legalize nine communities in Judea and Samaria, in response to the deadly terrorist attack that happened in Jerusalem two days earlier. The communities to be authorized are Avigil, Bet Hogla, Givat Harel/Haroeh, Givat Arnon, Mitzpe Yehuda, Malachei Hashalom, Ashael, Sde Boaz and Shaharit. To fully legalize the outposts, the government will have to prove that they were established on state land, and the High Court of Justice is liable to object to the move, resulting in a legal process that could take years. The Security Cabinet also said that the Civil Administration Higher Planning Committee, the Defense Ministry body responsible for authorizing new construction in Judea and Samaria, would be convened in the coming days to approve new residential units in other existing communities beyond the Green Line. For his part, Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, who also holds the post of minister in the Defense Ministry and has been tasked by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu with overseeing the Civil Administration, announced on Sunday that he would soon advance plans to construct some additional 10,000 homes in Judea and Samaria. The Security Cabinet furthermore approved a series of additional counter-terrorism measures, including reinforcing Israel Police and Border Police units in Jerusalem, and expanding operations against inciters and supporters of terrorism.

***Following Terror Wave, Israeli Firearm License Requests Spike by 400%;*** In the wake of the recent terrorist attacks, requests to get firearms licenses have spiked by 400%, as revealed Tuesday, February 14, in a National Security Committee discussion on the National Security Ministry's Firearm Licensing Division. The head of the division stated that "Until 2021, there were approximately 10,000 requests submitted annually. But in 2021, 20,000 applications were submitted following Operation Guardian of the Walls." In addition: "42,000 applications were submitted following the March 2022 wave of terrorist attacks." In response, committee chairman MK Zvika Fogel (Otzma Yehudit) said: "Give guns to those who live where the risk and danger are high. Don't give guns to anyone who asks." Furthermore, a subcommittee for confidential and classified issues was also established. Members of this subcommittee include Fogel, Likud MK Moshe Saada and Yesh Atid MK Merav Ben-Ari.

***With Toll of Over 42,000, Earthquake Worst in Turkey's Modern History – Erdogan;*** Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan announced Tuesday, February 14, that 35,418 people have died in Turkey because of last week's earthquake, making it the deadliest such disaster since the country's founding 100 years ago. Confirmed deaths passed those recorded from the massive Erzincan earthquake in 1939 that killed around 33,000 people. Erdogan said 105,505 people were injured because of the February 6 quake centered around Kahramanmaraş and its aftershocks. Almost 3,700 deaths have been confirmed in neighboring Syria, taking the combined toll in both countries to over 42,000. The Turkish president, who has referred to the quakes as "the disaster of the century," said more than 13,000 people were still being treated in hospital. Speaking in Ankara following a five-hour Cabinet meeting held at the headquarters of disaster agency AFAD, Erdogan said 47,000 buildings, which contained 211,000 residences, had either been destroyed or were so badly damaged as to require demolition. Aid agencies and governments have been stepping up efforts to bring help to devastated parts of Turkey and Syria, but a week after the disaster many of those left homeless are still struggling to meet basic needs, like finding shelter from the bitter cold.

***US Military Shoots down Iranian-Made Drone over Oil Site in Syria;*** The U.S. military announced Tuesday, February 14, that it shot down a drone believed to have been manufactured by Iran, as it was allegedly conducting surveillance over an oil site in northeastern Syria. The drone was taken down at around 2:30 p.m. local time, according to U.S. Central Command. "US forces in Syria engaged and shot down an Iranian-manufactured UAV attempting to conduct reconnaissance of Mission Support Site Conoco, a patrol base in northeast Syria," U.S. Central Command said in a statement. The U.S. and Iran both carry out counterterrorism missions in Syria, although the two countries support different groups. The U.S. backs a Kurdish-led group known as the Syrian Democratic Forces, which leads an autonomous government in northeastern Syria, and Iran supports the central government in Damascus. Iran, the Syrian government, and Russia have accused the U.S. of exploiting Syria's natural resources through a military presence the three countries say is illegitimate. And the U.S. says Iran has sought to expand its influence in Syria through support for militias that have targeted U.S. forces in the past.

***Israeli Future Lasers Can Shoot down Iranian Drones, Like in Ukraine - Top Defense Official;*** Senior Defense Ministry official Brig.-Gen. (res.) Danny Gold on Tuesday, February 14, said Israel's air defense lasers, when fully deployed in the future, could shoot down the drones Iran has been sending against Ukraine. Speaking at the Artificial Intelligence (AI) conference at Tel Aviv University, the Director of MAFAT [Directorate of Defense Research & Development] said his ministry is working on developing "the next generation of using lasers." He talked about multiple successful tests destroying rockets "with a very sophisticated laser weapons system... We have done the same for mortars, rockets, and UAVs (Unmanned Aerial Vehicles), like the Iranian UAVs they are sending to Ukraine. The same concept of UAV, we can shoot them down." In February 2022, then Prime Minister Naftali Bennett proclaimed that Israel's ability to use lasers had jumped forward and could be operational much sooner than people had expected. Last month, Aviv Kohavi told Israeli media in an outgoing interview as IDF chief, "The laser defense system is truly great news. It will be both land and air based. I do want to be cautious regarding time frames. In another two years, we expect to deploy systems along the Gaza Strip border to test this tool's effectiveness."

***More than Four in Ten U.S. Jews Say They Felt Less Safe than Last Year;*** Forty-one percent of American Jews feel their status in America is less secure than it was a year earlier, according to a new survey by the American Jewish Committee. According to the AJC survey, released Monday, that number grew from 31 percent the year before. A full 55 percent said their status was the same. Only four percent thought it was more secure. Last year saw several high-profile cases of anti-Semitism, including a hostage-taking at a Texas synagogue and anti-Jewish hatred shared by celebrities, chief among them rapper Kanye West. Former President Donald Trump dined with two openly anti-Semitic guests, drawing criticism from his own Jewish supporters. Eighty-five percent of American Jews, ages 18-29, have experienced anti-Semitism online. More than a quarter of those – 26 percent – said they feel physically threatened by these incidents. Four in five Jews said in the 2022 survey that anti-Semitism has grown in the past five years; nearly half said it's taken less seriously than other forms of bigotry or hate. A quarter of the respondents said they were directly targeted by anti-Semitic expressions, either in person or on social media, with three percent reporting a physical attack. Nearly four in 10 changed their behavior to lower risks to their safety. Similarly, nearly four in ten reported avoiding visible expressions of Jewishness in public, such as wearing a skullcap. Smaller percentages reported taking similar steps on campus or at work.

***More Damage Reported at the Muslim Structures on the Temple Mount;*** for the second time in one-week, structural damage was reported at a Muslim structure on the Temple Mount. Though the damage seems minor, and its cause is undetermined, the Muslim structures standing on Judaism's holiest site have a long history of collapse due to the earthquakes that are common to the region. The damage took

place on Thursday, February 9, and the Arab officials blamed Israel: “Sheikh Najeh Bakirat, deputy head of the Islamic Awqaf Administration in Occupied Jerusalem, warned that the Israeli occupation authority’s (IOA) refusal to allow the Islamic Awqaf to carry out renovations to the Aqsa Mosque’s prayer buildings and premises constitutes a great danger to its existence,” media reported. The reference points described in the articles were a bit confusing, as the Marwani Mosque and the al-Aqsa Mosque are separate locations. Al Aqsa, also known as the Qibli Mosque, is the prayer hall with a dark gray dome located at the southern end of the Temple Mount. The al-Marwani Mosque is a different location, constructed under the Temple Mount Plaza in an underground vaulted space referred to as Solomon’s stables. While the term ‘al-Aqsa Mosque’ (the further mosque) refers to a specific structure, the Palestinian media have, in recent years, begun to use it to refer to the entire Temple Mount (al-Haram al-Sharīf in Arabic). According to Dr. Mordechai Kedar, an expert Arabist, this is an intentional lie intended to allow the Palestinians to claim the entire Temple Mount. He suggested that the term will continue to be subverted with the intention of claiming the entire city of Jerusalem for Islam.



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